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AFGHANISTAN

Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI)

SUCCESS STORY

Improving Youth Engagement in Kunar

CCI supported youth volunteerism through the rehabilitation of a cricket pitch in Sarkani District of Kunar Province.



[USAID/OTI]

The Sarkani Cricket Team prepares to play their first match on the newly rehabilitated cricket field.

“Cricket is more than a game in our community. It brings youth from different villages together and strengthens unity among different tribes and their government.”

-The Sarkani District Governor

April 2013- Youth represent an important and often overlooked resilience in Afghanistan; heirs to the future of Afghanistan, yet too young to participate in customary leadership processes. In Kunar Province, youth have few opportunities to engage with each other or their local government. As a means of empowering and connecting this critical group, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives' (OTI) Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) is working to engage youth in productive, community projects through a partnership with the Sarkani Youth Association and the Sarkani district government. As part of this partnership, community members identified the need and asked for the District Governor's and CCI support to harness youth capacity and rehabilitate a central cricket pitch.

In order to ensure community oversight and participation, CCI worked with local leaders and youth association members to form a project shura: a project monitoring group which regularly met at the project site. Through the function of this group, the project strengthened ties and demonstrated the tangible benefits that the district government, local leaders and youth can provide.

Overall, the project leveled 18,000 square meters of playing field and renovated viewing stands. As a result of the partnership, youth volunteers contributed 30% of the unskilled labor during the course of implementation. The project successfully engaged different ethnic groups and youth from Sarkani villages in productive social activities, creating new relationships which are being renewed on the pitch as Afghanistan enters the cricket season.

During the completion ceremony on 9 April 2013, a member of the Sarkani Youth Association stated, “We are happy to have a playing field where we can host cricket teams from other communities. We will continue our cooperation with the local government to address other youth priorities. We believe that through education and healthy outlets, youth can better serve their communities.” As a part of its programmatic vision, CCI is working to increase the number of opportunities for youth interaction, strengthening critical populations against the sources and pressures of instability.